

Page Denied

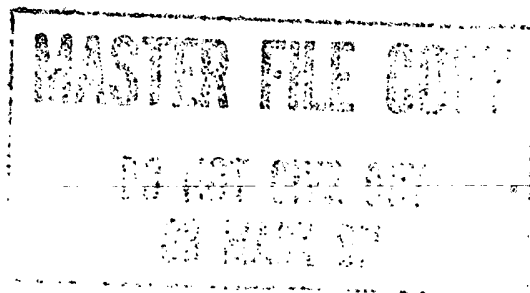
Next 1 Page(s) In Document Denied



Directorate of
Intelligence

Secret

25X1



Gorbachev's Walkabouts: Opportunities and Risks

25X1

An Intelligence Assessment

PROJECT NUMBER	SOVA-0248-87	
① W M J K		②
PAGE NUMBERS	12	
TOTAL NUMBER OF COPIES	475	
DISSEM DATE	86/12/03	
EXTRA COPIES	300-394	
RECORD CENTER	395-444	
JOB NUMBER	425-147	MIS

Secret

SOV 86-10055X
November 1986

Copy 359

Page Denied



**Directorate of
Intelligence**

Secret

25X1

Gorbachev's Walkabouts: Opportunities and Risks

25X1

An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [] the
Office of Soviet Analysis. It was coordinated with the
Directorate of Operations. []

25X1

25X1

Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Domestic Policy Division,
SOVA, []

25X1

Reverse Blank

Secret

*SOV 86-10055X
November 1986*

Secret

25X1

**Gorbachev's Walkabouts:
Opportunities and Risks**

25X1

Key Judgments*Information available
as of 22 October 1986
was used in this report.*

Gorbachev has departed from the practices of his recent predecessors, who remained aloof from direct contact with the population, by making frequent forays into the public to converse informally with ordinary citizens. His walkabouts in city streets, farms, and factories during trips to provincial areas are reminiscent of Khrushchev's efforts a quarter century ago to open a dialogue with society. Nationally televised coverage, not available to Khrushchev, has substantially increased the impact on public opinion of Gorbachev's forays. []

25X1

Gorbachev is using these carefully managed and well-publicized encounters to achieve several interrelated political purposes. The walkabouts assist Gorbachev in:

- Cultivating the image of a "new type" of Soviet leader, who is in close touch with the public and willing to deal frankly with popular concerns and economic and societal problems.
- Countering political alienation by increasing the populace's sense of participation in the system.
- Personally gathering information on the popular mood.
- Energizing public support for particular policy initiatives—such as the campaigns against alcohol and corruption, and the drive to improve consumer goods and services.
- Putting pressure on both midlevel officials who are dragging their feet in implementing his programs and Politburo colleagues who oppose his initiatives. []

25X1

Gorbachev has taken a personal hand in structuring nationally televised coverage of his walkabouts to ensure that the proper image and messages are being sent. We believe that television and radio coverage is delayed to allow for official review and editing, and that the General Secretary plays a direct role in this process. The more thorough, and often conservative, editing of print media probably reflects Soviet concern that print media contain the final, authoritative account of record. []

25X1

Gorbachev's use of walkabouts has associated risks as well:

- His "populist" appeal may be creating concern among the leadership that he is breaking tacit rules of the game by broadening the arena for policy discussion beyond the confines of the Politburo.
- By making midlevel officials objects of public censure, Gorbachev is heightening insecurity among elites, and this could be exploited by would-be Politburo rivals.

Secret

Secret

25X1

- Gorbachev may be generating popular hopes for improved living conditions and social change that he cannot fulfill. Thus, his promises could boomerang and erode public confidence in the regime.
- The dramatic increase in close personal contact with crowds during walkabouts puts Gorbachev at greater risk of physical attack. [REDACTED]

25X1

For now, the political benefits of walkabouts outweigh the attendant risks for Gorbachev. This could change in the long run, however, if he oversteps his authority to go over the heads of his colleagues in public discussions of policy, if he does not follow through with removals of midlevel officials who are obstructing his initiatives, or if his programs cannot keep pace with the public expectations he has raised. Should this happen, the walkabouts would lose their utility, and continued use of them could further damage Gorbachev's position. [REDACTED]

25X1

Secret

Secret

25X1

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Key Judgments	iii
The Traditional Isolation of Soviet Leaders	1
Staging of Gorbachev's Walkabouts	2
Publicizing the Walkabouts	2
Gorbachev's Goals for Walkabouts	3
Building an Image as Leader of a New Type	3
Tapping Public Opinion and Mobilizing Popular Participation	4
Pushing Particular Policies	5
Pressuring Lower Officials	8
Pushing Policy Agenda Within Top Leadership	9
Risks for Gorbachev	10
Possible Consequences	11

Reverse Blank

v

Secret

Secret

25X1

Gorbachev's Walkabouts: Opportunities and Risks

25X1

The Traditional Isolation of Soviet Leaders

Gorbachev's walkabouts represent a significant departure from traditional patterns of leadership behavior in the USSR. Under both czarist and Soviet systems, most top leaders have been distanced from their subjects and surrounded by security tighter than that for most heads of state. Politburo members live, work, travel, shop, eat, and vacation in special facilities that provide no firsthand observation of how the general population lives. Gromyko's daughter once remarked that her father literally had not set foot on the streets of Moscow for 30 years.

After Stalin's death the leadership became somewhat less remote from the public. Khrushchev, in particular, periodically appeared in informal settings with groups of citizens. But none of Gorbachev's recent predecessors systematically used public forays as a public relations technique and political foil:

- During his early years as General Secretary, Brezhnev made occasional visits to farms and factories, but Soviet press and radio coverage of these excursions consisted of very brief and colorless statements that gave little flavor of the substance of his "comradely conversations" with workers. In his later years Brezhnev increasingly withdrew from direct contact with ordinary citizens.
- Andropov, during his short tenure, made a single site visit—to the Ordzhonikidze machine tool factory in Moscow, where he talked with several workers on trivial subjects—before he was overtaken by illness.
- Soviet media reported only one occasion on which Chernenko engaged in an informal exchange with workers—an August 1984 visit to a Moscow metal-working factory. Like Andropov and Brezhnev in his last years, Chernenko's physical debility precluded further visits of this sort.

The Khrushchev Precedent

Khrushchev used walkabouts as one of a variety of techniques to promote his political agenda. When he came to power he confronted an intransigent and immobilized system, long frozen by Stalin's terror. Seeking to shake the bureaucracy out of its torpor, and sensing the need to combat political alienation among the population at large, he mounted a program to increase political participation at lower levels and to mobilize society behind his efforts to revitalize the system.

25X1

In pressing his "populist" policies, Khrushchev used several unusual tactics designed to open up elite debate and confront his opponents with public support for his programs: he peppered top leaders with published correspondence, called expanded Central Committee meetings, interjected sharp comments and questions into his speeches so as to turn prepared presentations into impromptu interchanges with embarrassed bureaucrats in the audience, and engaged local officials and managers in animated and detailed conversations during his visits to local workplaces. In the end, however, Khrushchev's efforts to circumvent his colleagues backfired. In bypassing official channels, he mortified the bureaucracy, heightened his colleagues' fears of stirring up public criticism, and thereby hastened his own downfall.

25X1

In contrast with Gorbachev, Khrushchev seemed more concerned with quizzing local officials and managers than with talking with the general public. Moreover, while the Khrushchev encounters appeared to have been quite genuinely spontaneous in setting and scenario, in the absence of televised coverage they did not have the impact of immediacy that characterizes Gorbachev's walkabouts.

25X1

25X1

25X1

Staging of Gorbachev's Walkabouts

Gorbachev's walkabouts have taken on a rather stylized format. There is obviously some stage-managing in the selection of settings and participants, but the nature of the conversations and the reactions of the populace show some spontaneity. The General Secretary, after being greeted by hosting officials, gives some opening remarks and then begins a conversation by addressing one person. He asks about the conditions under which people live and work; lavishes appreciation on the local scenery and cultural treasures; alternately praises and chides officials and enterprise heads; and scolds, cajoles, and jokes with the crowd. Gorbachev seems to be relaxed and in command of the situation, quick to react to a remark and turn it to his own advantage, enjoying himself in the process. He has conducted publicized walkabouts during visits to 12 localities throughout the USSR since May 1985, and two or more walkabouts took place in several of these locations. []

Questions and remarks to Gorbachev, although seemingly quite frank, are usually in line with comments on similar subjects in letters selected for publication in Soviet newspapers. The crowd much of the time acts as a Greek chorus, echoing and reinforcing Gorbachev's statements. This reaction is undoubtedly due both to Gorbachev's charismatic style and to many people's apprehensions about expressing views critical of the regime. Gorbachev's ability to manipulate conversations allows him to cover a series of preselected topics in what comes across as a spontaneous interchange. []

Because we do not know the method of selection or the composition of the street crowds and workplace groups, we are unable to determine the extent to which the walkabout crowds and the opinions they express are representative of the Soviet public and its concerns. Considering the public locales and large numbers of people involved, it seems unlikely that the participants are completely handpicked, but they undoubtedly are screened to some extent. In all likelihood, identified malcontents or troublemakers have been weeded out of workplace groups. []

Publicizing the Walkabouts

The walkabouts have been heavily publicized by Soviet newspapers and television. Gorbachev seems to be personally structuring the coverage to manipulate the image he presents. He apparently sees the walkabout as an important feature of his personal game plan for consolidating his political position, invigorating the system, and improving its performance across the board. Probably because of Gorbachev's growing confidence in his own ability to handle himself in front of the cameras and to manage the dialogues to his advantage, media coverage of these events has steadily become more extensive since Gorbachev's initial walkabout in Leningrad in May 1985. []

Television and radio coverage of the walkabouts is normally delayed, seemingly to allow for official review and deletion of excessively frank exchanges or sequences unflattering to the regime. According to a contact of the US Consulate in Leningrad, television broadcasting of Gorbachev's visit there in May 1985 was held up each evening until Gorbachev could personally edit all footage shot during that day. On one occasion a radiobroadcast of Gorbachev's Krasnodar walkabout in September 1986 included several conversations not heard in the initial broadcast, aired three hours earlier. The added comments were especially sharp and touched sensitive topics that presumably required clearance from a high-level authority—perhaps Gorbachev himself. []

Press accounts of walkabouts are apparently edited even more thoroughly to delete some controversial remarks that had been heard on television or radio. Newspaper versions of Gorbachev's visit to the Soviet Far East in July 1986, for example, were usually somewhat briefer than the television or radio reports. The more careful review of press versions may be a result of the customarily longer deadlines for print media, which provide more time for risk aversion. Greater care is likely to be taken with newspaper versions because they are the permanent and authoritative account of record. In all likelihood, Gorbachev, having ensured that the proper impact has been made on national television, is less concerned with the versions that follow in print. []

Secret

Not All the News Is Fit To Print

Some of the sharper exchanges that took place in Gorbachev's walkabouts and that were heard on radio and television accounts have been deleted from the press versions. The following conversation between Gorbachev and a young man took place at a public square in Khabarovsk on 30 July 1986, as televised by Novosti on that day:

(Young man) *Mikhail Sergeyevich, I have a simple question. They said from the platform of the plenum that we should criticize, criticize all of them, Lenin-style. I risked doing so at the trade union committee, with the director of the base. Today I'm out of a job. So that's my question . . .*

(Gorbachev) *Why were you criticizing him?*

(Young man) *For his work, for his evasions. We reprimanded him in the trade union committee, reprimanded the director, found him guilty of not working properly.*

(Gorbachev) *And today, these faults . . .*

(Young man interrupts) *And so today I'm out of a job.*

(Gorbachev) *So they found some excuse?*

(Young man) *They did.*

(Gorbachev) *What's your last name?*

(Young man) *Andryshinov.*

(Gorbachev) *First name and patronymic?*

(Young man) *Vladimir Ivanovich.*

(Gorbachev) *I would recommend the kraykom not only to go into these facts, but also to publish their findings in the papers.*

(Because Khabarovsk newspapers are not available to us, we are unable to confirm whether this instruction was followed by local officials.)

25X1

The walkabout to the square was very briefly summarized in a correspondent's report published in the 31 July Izvestiya, however, with only a blurred and bland reference to this interchange:

M. S. Gorbachev toured the city 30 July . . . at Glory Square . . . People spoke frankly: Yes, life is improving before our very eyes, this cannot be denied. But how much more still remains to be done! . . . There must also be stricter exactingness toward leaders, so that they are closer to people and consult the workers. After all, it is impossible to be received by some chiefs. And if you say something out of turn, they start persecuting you for criticizing. . .

25X1

Gorbachev's Goals for Walkabouts

Gorbachev's energetic and increasingly frequent use of the walkabouts seems geared to the following goals.

**Building an Image as
Leader of a New Type**

The walkabout fits neatly with Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* (openness) in dealing forthrightly with social ills and regime failings and with his exhortations to

officials to pay greater heed to public opinion. Walkabouts allow Gorbachev to present himself as accessible, active, frank, and direct—in effect, a model for the “new type” of Soviet official.

25X1

The now-standard presence of Raisa Gorbacheva lends an air of informality and is presumably intended to emphasize the “human” side of the Soviet leader.

25X1

Raisa remarked in

25X1

Secret

Figure 1. Gorbachev with his wife, Raisa, at a housing complex in Moscow, 31 May 1986



25X1

Geneva during the summit that she often accompanies her husband in the USSR because their appearances together seem to “inspire” the people. She has recently become more prominent on television—being shown asking a question at a Komsomol exhibit in Stavropol, and referred to by name during the Krasnodar walkabout.

Tapping Public Opinion and Mobilizing Popular Participation

Gorbachev may genuinely believe that his predecessors’ aloofness from the population limited their awareness of domestic problems. In Krasnodar, he accused Brezhnev (without naming him) of wearing “rose-tinted spectacles” that prevented him from seeing difficulties in the country. Gorbachev’s encounters with citizens do provide him useful firsthand impressions. He has probably used insights gained from the walkabouts as an independent check on the accuracy of official reporting, which—as he knows—is often massaged by Central Committee *apparatchiki*, fearful of relaying bad news to the leadership.

25X1

25X1

The new Gorbachev style is becoming *de rigueur*. High-level officials, previously remote from the public, have appeared on live television broadcasts and radio call-in programs to explain policy and to respond to listener criticisms; the press conference has become a familiar propaganda device. Several top leaders—Moscow City Party boss Boris Yel’tsin, CPSU “second secretary” Yegor Ligachev, Chairman of the RSFSR Council of Ministers Vitaliy Vorotnikov, and even Supreme Soviet Presidium Chairman Andrey Gromyko—have imitated Gorbachev’s walkabouts, although only Yel’tsin seems to be genuinely comfortable in this setting. (None of these leaders, however, has emulated Gorbachev’s inclusion of his wife in the proceedings.)

Gorbachev seems to use the walkabouts to combat political alienation by giving the population a greater sense of involvement in the system. He perhaps also finds the walkabout a convenient forum for attempting to stimulate greater popular commitment to resolving domestic problems through improved worker performance.

25X1

25X1

Secret

Figure 2. Sovkhoz worker makes a point, Komsomol'sk walkabout, 29 July 1986



25X1

Like Khrushchev, Gorbachev promotes participation in the system along approved lines—urging a group in Vladivostok to “join in, not just during elections” and warning a Krasnodar crowd they “must not wait for instructions from above.” He also seizes on citizens’ complaints of consumer shortages to lecture his listeners that only hard work and individual responsibility can provide Soviet consumers with an abundance of goods. “Are you in the mood for work?” he asked in Komsomol'sk. Musing on the problems of Soviet youth—who, he claimed, are “a little spoiled”—he told some farm workers in Stavropol that the solution is to start children on farm chores early: “It didn’t do me any harm that I started to work . . . at the age of 13.”

The walkabout conversations seem designed to foster the impression that Gorbachev is successfully opening a dialogue with ordinary citizens that is intended to solicit not only complaints and information but also suggestions that will be taken seriously by the leadership. An article in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* (3 August 1986) declared Gorbachev’s swing through the Far East “an exceptionally significant event” because of the “important political outcome” of establishing “direct, extremely open dialogue” between the party

and the people. The article stated that the Far East walkabouts represented “a step forward” from the “often still timid” public discussion during Gorbachev’s trip to the Volga region in April.

25X1

Pushing Particular Policies

The themes of walkabout conversations seem to be chosen carefully by Gorbachev, with the apparent purpose of reiterating and garnering support for his own policy priorities in areas that directly affect daily life and consumer interests and where public opinion is an important concern to policymakers. Thus, Gorbachev has emphasized the need to raise worker productivity, the discipline campaign, and the measures to curtail alcohol abuse and unearned incomes. In late summer 1986, Gorbachev added the problems of poor housing, public services, and health care to his list of standard themes. When talking with peasants, Gorbachev’s remarks reveal a thorough knowledge of life on the farm and an apparently real concern to alleviate the bleakness of village life and absence of recreational outlets as a means of stemming the flight of youth to the city and the heavy consumption of alcohol in rural areas.

25X1

25X1

Secret

Secret

Major Themes of Gorbachev's Conversations During Walkabouts

Shoddy Consumer Goods and Rude Services

(Gorbachev) *I could name you, if I were to read a list of enterprises which now produce footwear, raincoats, television receivers and so on, these things go straight from the works into the warehouse where they lie. . . . Why? Because no one takes them because they do not work. The television sets stop working in 13 to 15 minutes. . . . We do not like it, you understand. And you workers of the television works, you are displeased at the way the construction workers build, the roof leaks and so forth, there is outrage.*

(Gorbachev) *Services should be normal, and the atmosphere one of good will, and our public catering areas must become places where we can come with our children, sit down and linger, and even have a rest. This is how it should be. Should it really be a case of: What do you want—make an order or clear off.*

Drunkeness

(Woman) *Some policies should have been brought up 10 years ago, on drunkeness, for example.*

(Gorbachev) *It needs to be continued . . .*

(Women) *Thank you for this.*

(Gorbachev) *. . . We have gone in for this, and spoken about it openly. Misfortune in production, misfortune on the tram, misfortune on the street, in the family drama, and not just misfortune. . . . In this movement, in such a situation, I see that our people, both men and women, everyone gives support to this.*

Unearned Incomes

(Woman) *Do you like people here?*

(Gorbachev) *You know, they are the same, they are our people, all of them. . . . There is a certain part that lately has shown a liking for living at other people's expense, to get more comforts and benefits and not to work too hard. But most people are disposed to work well, so that everything is honest. . . .*

Official Responses to Citizens' Letters

(Unidentified woman) *Mikhail Sergeyevich! . . . As recently as yesterday I was at the city party committee . . . And I raised the question of failure to keep to the timetables for replies to letters from the working people.*

(Gorbachev) *Hm . . .*

(Woman) *And I have been fighting and fighting there, but have not got anywhere. . . . I then telephoned. . . .*

(Gorbachev, interrupting) *This is what I think. There may be a question. . . . They see that it is not something you can deal with at once. So invite the person who has written and say: . . . we will tell you at such and such a date. . . . They must keep to it, [but] this does not mean that the answer to your question will be yes, or that it is going to be no.*

Effectiveness of the Komsomol

(Unidentified male) *Ninety percent of Soviet young people are Komsomol members. . . . It cannot be that 90 percent are all ideologically committed Komsomol members.*

(Gorbachev) *Well, what do you think?*

(Male) *Reduce it.*

(Gorbachev) *And drive people from the Komsomol? . . . My own time in the Komsomol coincided with the postwar years. Those who remember those years know that there were unbelievable difficulties then. . . . But I will say it was a militant Komsomol then. It was a Komsomol with teeth. . . . I talked directly about everything I thought about. . . . Our Komsomol needs to raise its head.*

"Democracy" and Anarchy

(Gorbachev) *When I say democracy, this does not mean that demagogues, self-seekers, and anonymous letterwriters will begin to rule.*

Secret

Secret

(continued)

It never happens that there are rights without any responsibilities. . . . When we say more democracy, that does not at all mean more of I'll grab what I want. It is not at all a license to do anything. It is not at all anarchy. It is the opportunity to discuss things together . . . but it does not at all mean that everyone looks out for himself and disregards society.

We want our people to say what they think. . . . Even if there are one or two or a dozen demagogues, even if there are several hundred in the country as a whole—are they going to deflect us from our chosen path?

(Crowd) No, of course not!

Housing

(Gorbachev) We have invested several billion rubles more in housing construction. But here it is important also to utilize individual contributions. The whole society must be mobilized to ensure that by the end of the year 2000 every family has its own apartment . . . But, I must say, little care is being taken to maintain the homes we do live in. In cooperative-built blocks the staircases, lobbies, and walls are in excellent order. Yet you only have to enter a [state]-run house where the accommodation is not privately owned and

where the rent is cheap, and the walls are dirty, the lobbies full of rubbish, and conditions are unhygienic . . . housing organizations and the tenants themselves must be mobilized; you must take care of the building you live in and stop relying on others.

Health

(Woman) I speak for medical personnel, middle and junior levels. That's our hospital, City Hospital Number One, over here. I am a nurse there. I would nevertheless like to see higher allocations to our Health Service and to see remuneration according to work.

(Gorbachev) You have raised and posed a very big question. Medical services mean health. What is the most precious thing? Health. When a person is healthy, he can then develop as an individual, in all spheres. This is the main thing. We are now preparing a major decision, for many years to come, on the development of our health services. A major decision, on the development of its base. Measures are in preparation to improve pay incentives in medical work.

25X1

Walkabout conversations increasingly reflect Gorbachev's concern to press his notion of *perestroika* (restructuring). Although he has yet to define this word precisely, perhaps even to himself, Gorbachev has talked about effecting "revolutionary change," "from below and from above." We do not know exactly what these changes might mean, but Gorbachev has suggested that restructuring involves personnel turnover, a reorganization of the economy, and a radical alteration of public attitudes. In response to a citizen's direct challenge that "the material aspect is proceeding faster than the consciousness aspect," he admitted that "a gulf has formed" between the two and expressed hope that changed policies on "the economic, social, moral, and political fronts" will alter people's "awareness." Presumably, he realizes that in the absence of attitudinal change, behavioral change will be ephemeral.

To promote Soviet foreign policy and demonstrate its support from Soviet citizens, Gorbachev recently expanded his walkabout repertoire. During his walkabouts in Krasnodar and Stavropol, he, for the first time, made extensive remarks on world affairs and Soviet-US relations, explaining established Soviet policies in a conversational tone. In an apparent effort to identify the regime with traditional Russian national sentiment, he invoked the name of the 19th-century Russian writer Feodor Dostoevskiy—long reviled in official publications as a dangerous religious mystic and still given only selective praise. Playing on xenophobic popular attitudes, he took the occasion to refer to imprisoned US journalist Nicholas Daniloff as a "spy."

25X1

25X1

Secret

Secret

Pressuring Lower Officials

Gorbachev uses nationally televised conversations with citizens to suggest that inept lower officials are to blame for unsuccessful and inefficient policies—deflecting criticism away from the responsible top policymakers and from endemic faults and shortages of the Soviet system and using local leaders and managers as scapegoats. By direct criticism of such footdraggers, and by encouraging citizens to complain about shortcomings of factory managers and regional officials, he embarrasses them in front of the crowd and the television audience:

- He took advantage of a worker's complaint and reprimanded local officials in Komsomol'sk for falsifying production statistics:
 - *(Unidentified voice)* We will work, but the local organs must strictly carry out the instructions of the central bodies.
 - *(Gorbachev)* What do you have in mind?
 - *(Unidentified voice)* Well, for instance, reports made ahead of time to the central bodies on plan fulfillment to show themselves in the best light—where in fact things have not been completed.
 - *(Gorbachev)* We should not try to make everything look smooth, comrades. . . . And there is no point in the director of the plant putting rose-tinted spectacles on the General Secretary. (laughter) Neither dark glasses nor rose-tinted ones are what we need.
- Talking with factory workers in Komsomol'sk, Gorbachev tried to encourage a whistleblower and ridiculed local media censorship in the following exchange:
 - *(Unidentified voice)* You demand the truth, and they try to get rid of you. It happens; it happens.
 - *(Gorbachev)* That is no good at all. I say it before everybody—those standing there (video

shows him pointing to local leaders) and before you—that we condemn this. And it is necessary that the newspaper write about this in a loud voice. I have met the editor of the town's newspaper here. We have compared what the central press writes and what the local newspapers write and we see that in the local ones there is peace and quiet and plenty. What is wrong? Does not the [party] Secretary . . . give permission for strong criticism to be voiced? (laughter)

- Moscow radio carried an interchange between a *sovkhos* worker and Gorbachev that pinned the blame of lagging agricultural production on the lowest managerial level:
 - *(Speaker)* A whole range of *sovkhoses* are still running at a loss . . .
 - *(Gorbachev)* And who is it that makes the farms run at a loss?
 - *(Speaker)* It is the directors.
- Similarly, in another chronic problem area—housing—Gorbachev accused the Vladivostok party boss of building “too little” housing in the city and, when the official tried to defend himself, criticized him further for cutting back in the face of increased demand.
- In a speech to local party officials of Krasnodar on 18 September 1986, Gorbachev—fresh from animated conversations with citizens in the city square—explicitly linked the public support he had encountered for “more determined” work on his initiatives to essential and timely official action. He threatened the assembled bureaucrats that, “If the Soviet people were to see that the Central Committee and government had stopped halfway . . . that could cause disillusionment in society.” Those footdraggers who give loud lipservice to the restructuring of society while furtively attempting to sabotage it, he said, will face the “working people (who) see everything and will deal with each one accordingly, some now, others a little later.”

25X1

Secret

Secret

Figure 3. Gorbachev, with
Politburo member Shcherbits-
kiy, at a steel mill in Dneprope-
trovsk, 26 June 1986



25X1

Pushing Policy Agenda Within Top Leadership

Gorbachev has, on occasion, used the walkabout forum to argue for a policy initiative still under leadership consideration or to mention a program that has not yet been announced. In this way, he is soliciting public support for policies he favors and is putting pressure on his peers to support a policy with demonstrated public appeal.

A young man complained to Gorbachev in Vladivostok that the new wage system in coal mines pays workers according to production, although managers continue to receive their regular wage regardless of mine output. Gorbachev seized the opportunity to argue for extension of the system:

I think that we are going to introduce this kind of experiment, not really an experiment, but this kind of system, throughout the country. . . . We have gone on to financial autonomy . . . we have tied the worker to the end product . . . but why has management remained on salaries? . . . Now the worker is going to ask questions. . . . Good. We will put all these things right.

In Leningrad in May 1986, he answered a woman's concern over "indolent and drunken people" by stating that the following day "drastic measures to fight drunkenness will be published," as indeed they were. Gorbachev in mid-September 1986 reassured a lawyer in Krasnodar, who spoke regretfully of the low prestige and pay of his profession and the lack of change in this area, that the regime is "now adopting a decision" on improved training for lawyers and popular education in legal fundamentals. He responded to the appeal of a Krasnodar nurse that medical personnel receive higher pay by asserting that "we are now preparing a major decision" to upgrade health services and raise medical workers' pay. And, a month later, the published account of the 16 October Politburo meeting stated that a decree increasing the wages of health services workers had been adopted.

25X1

25X1

Similarly, Gorbachev seemed to be attempting to preempt any Politburo opposition when he initiated an exchange with members of the audience during his

25X1

Secret

Secret

speech to the Kharbarovsk party *aktiv* on 31 July 1986. He stated, "We are completing the drawing up of a new law about the socialist enterprise association" that would promote its financial autonomy. This exchange followed:

- (Gorbachev) I would like to ask your opinion. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to promulgate the draft of this law?
- (Unidentified voices) Yes, yes!
- (Gorbachev) For broad discussion?
- (Unidentified voices) Yes, yes! . . .
- (Gorbachev) This affects all labor collectives. I shall report your opinion to the Politburo. []

Risks for Gorbachev

Gorbachev's strategy of using nationally televised walkabouts to push his policy initiatives at the expense of political rivals and midlevel footdraggers is not without risk. His occasional "leaks" of programs being discussed by top leaders may harden their resentment and unify their resistance to his initiatives. His "populist" attempt to play to the galleries and circumvent other Politburo members is probably alienating some top leaders—as happened under Khrushchev, who violated the unwritten rules of Soviet politics reserving policy discussions exclusively to the Politburo. []

Gorbachev is creating problems for himself at lower levels of the bureaucracy as well. There is a danger that otherwise disparate segments of officialdom—anticipating erosion or loss of job security and privileges—may coalesce against him and provide a ready constituency for any top leader who may decide to mount a challenge to the General Secretary. []

Gorbachev's deliberate effort to incite and publicize a ground swell of public opinion in support of his policies—in particular, the anticorruption campaign—is undoubtedly heightening insecurity among midlevel officials, whose traditional immunity from public criticism and accountability is being eroded. He uses the crowd's approving rejoinders to his jabs as a backboard to bounce innuendo back at recalcitrant

bureaucrats, making the point that "the people" support his policies and are growing impatient with reluctant local authorities. A manager is not an "appanage prince," Gorbachev told a group in Kom-somolsk; "he has to serve the people. It is not a case of them having to say their prayers to him." An account of Gorbachev's walkabout in Vladivostok (*Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 3 August 1986) contrasted his frank discussions and the people's "sharp, even angry" talk "about everything as it actually is" with the way startled "local leaders shrank and blushed scarlet" and whispered in panic behind his back. Officials who cannot seem to adjust to *glasnost*, and instead pressure the media in their bailiwicks to repress news that reflects badly on their management, do not fare well at Gorbachev's hands. []

25X1

25X1

On the other hand, perhaps Gorbachev is becoming caught in a vise of rising popular expectations aroused by his own calls for citizen participation. The appeal to popular enthusiasm and voluntarism could boomerang if his programs for the economy and society fail to produce goods and services at the rate the public is now being encouraged to anticipate. Gorbachev faces a difficult balancing act to maintain some kind of rough equilibrium between the effort that he is requesting from the labor force and the rewards that the economy can afford to provide; and between his definition of "socialist justice" as a fair return to each citizen for hard work, the jealously guarded privileges of the party elite, and his own priorities for spurring economic growth through massive investments in some areas of the economy that offer no immediate benefit to consumers. []

25X1

25X1

Gorbachev's walkabouts, by markedly increasing the scale and, at times, the intimacy of his personal contact with large groups, make him vulnerable to physical attack. US Embassy sources in Moscow []

[] have picked up rumors of an attempted assassination: according to one scenario, an attempt was made on the life of Gorbachev while he was on vacation, and both he and his wife were injured; another variant states that a shot intended for

25X1

25X1

25X1

Secret

Secret

Figure 4. Gorbachev, with an uneasy local functionary, Komsomol'sk walkabout, 29 July 1986 [redacted]



25X1

Gorbachev missed and struck his wife—which would explain her absence from the Krasnodar walkabout on 18 September.¹ [redacted]

reportedly were dismayed at her presence in Iceland, fearing it might erode Gorbachev's credibility. [redacted]

25X1

Some Soviet officials may view Gorbachev's walkabouts as unseemly efforts to imitate the self-promotion techniques of Western politicians. Gorbachev's public display of his wife as the Soviet "First Lady," has reportedly raised eyebrows in some circles. According to US Embassy sources, Raisa's high profile is received with pleasure and pride by some intellectuals but causes resentment and apprehension among certain high officials—in particular, Ligachev and those close to him. Presumably such officials resent Raisa's visibility as a graphic representation of the political influence they think she wields. Several Soviet diplomats have recently stated that the Soviet populace is critical of Raisa, and some Soviet officials

Possible Consequences

Gorbachev's walkabouts appear to be useful for him as a political tactic in manipulating public opinion in support of his policies and showcasing him as a new type of Soviet leader. If Gorbachev can produce results—particularly in the consumer goods and services sector—commensurate with the expectations being generated by his public statements, he may well continue to exploit these informal encounters for some time to come. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

Continued or expanded use of the walkabout format could ultimately prove counterproductive if this public relations technique is not accompanied by policy successes:

- If the regime fails to achieve its announced consumer goals, Gorbachev's walkabout remarks could increasingly lose credibility with the citizenry, and the responsiveness now apparent in this setting could be transformed into public cynicism.

¹ During his most recent walkabouts in Krasnodar and Stavropol, media coverage for the first time included footage of security vehicles; the heightened media visibility may have been intended as a deterrent. The available evidence does not permit us to determine with certainty whether Gorbachev's walkabout security actually has been beefed up recently. A close review of Soviet television tapes suggests that differences in security may be a function of the situation rather than of the passage of time, and that bodyguards are more in evidence whenever Gorbachev is closely hemmed in by crowds in a street setting than when he is talking with a smaller group at a work site. [redacted]

25X1

Secret

Secret

- If Gorbachev fails to counter the footdragging of lower level officials resistant to change, through further cadre replacements to “restructure” economic management, his words about public accountability of officials will begin to sound hollow.
- If Gorbachev goes beyond his brief in using the walkabouts to bring pressure to bear on his Politburo peers, he could trigger political opposition within the leadership.

25X1

Secret

Secret

Secret